

Tuesday, June 14, 2011

Libby - newspapers

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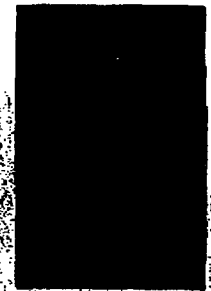
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# EPA: New data might significantly delay cleanup

By Brent Shrum

Kootenai Valley Record

Draft toxicity data released last month for Libby amphibole asbestos could significantly delay the Environmental Protection Agency's local cleanup work, agency representatives told the Lincoln County commissioners last week.

Efforts to move toward records of decision that will finalize work on the cleanup project are "in limbo" while the draft

toxicity assessment is subjected to scientific peer review, said EPA project manager Rebecca Thomas. If everything goes smoothly, the process to make the data official "could go as quickly as a year and a half to two years," Thomas said.

"Conversely, it could take far, far longer," she added.

The toxicity study includes figures for both cancer and non-cancer risks. While the cancer risk for Libby asbestos is estimated to be similar to the risk factor

already in use by the EPA to regulate exposure to other forms of asbestos, the non-cancer risk estimates are new to the agency. No non-cancer risk data exists for other forms of asbestos.

It's the non-cancer data that's complicating efforts to finalize the local cleanup project, according to Thomas.

"EPA doesn't feel like it's appropriate to move forward with a remedy selection at this point, until we know if those numbers

are real or not," she said.

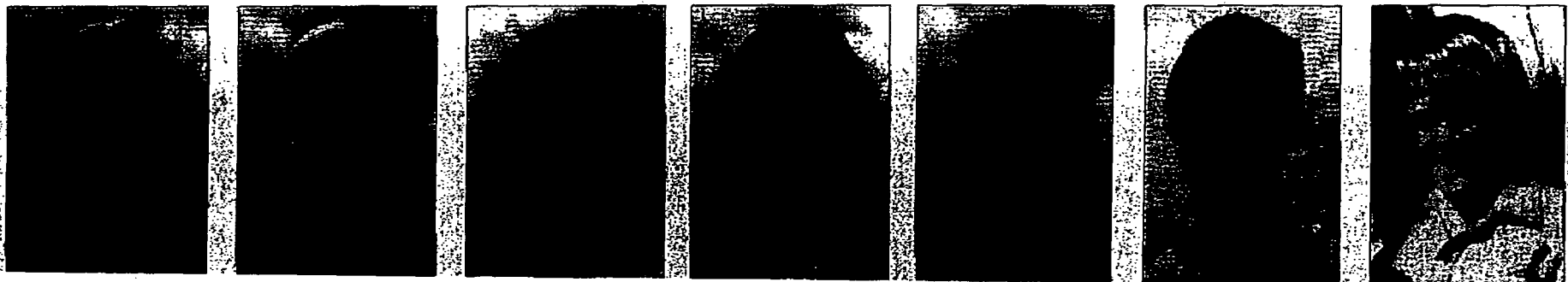
Work at Libby's Riverfront Park, which was formerly used as a processing site for asbestos-contaminated vermiculite, is expected to be completed this summer. The new toxicity numbers probably won't change the scope of the cleanup at the park, Thomas said.

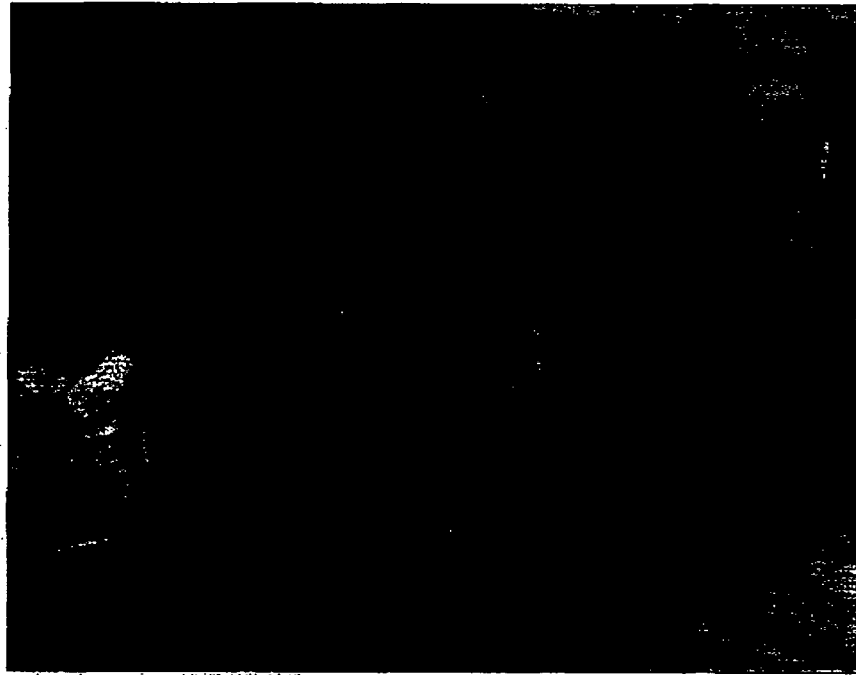
"It will involve bringing in clean fill across the entire area, a large area of the park, so it will reduce exposure," she said.

EPA decisions on development at the former lumber mill that is now the site of the Kootenai Business Park may or may not be affected, depending on how potentially contaminated areas will be used, said agency project manager Mike Cirian.

"If it's going to be used as a parking lot that's going to be capped, we could go with that, but if you're digging a hole to do mud

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**Bike Winners** - Winners in the Libby Masonic Lodge's annual bicycle giveaway at Asa Wood Elementary were (from left) kindergarteners Avery Rose and Rusty Gillispie, first-graders Chloe Tebby and Dawson Rose, second-graders Carlos Dealvarado and Kaylee Angel, and third-grader Donavon Herb. Not pictured is third-grader Kaylee Myers. The bicycles were presented by Masonic Lodge member Gary Dodge (far right). The annual giveaway promotes reading, with good readers getting chances to win a bicycle.

## EPA

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boggling, we might have to look at doing it some other place," he said.

Cirian said he doesn't know how long the new toxicity data could delay a record of decision on residential cleanups in the Libby and Troy areas.

"Right now I don't have

a clue," he said. "We've got a lot of work to do."

Asked for her personal opinion on how long it's likely to take for the toxicity data to become final, Thomas said she's doubtful it will ever happen. Because vermiculite mined near Libby was processed at locations across the country

and used in a variety of commercial applications including insulation and garden products, the finalization of the data could have an enormous impact.

"I'll be surprised if they ever see the light of day," Thomas said. "I think the ramifications are going to be so big."

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